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Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury
Second meeting
Geneva, 19–23 November 2018
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Organizational matters: organization of work

Scenario note for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to provide, in the annex to the present note, a scenario note for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, prepared by the President of the Conference of the Parties.

* UNEP/MC/COP.2/1.

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Annex

Scenario note prepared by the President of the Conference of the Parties

1. In this scenario note, I would like to take the opportunity to set out some general expectations for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, over which I will preside. These expectations have been developed in consultation with the Bureau and, through that body, the regional groups, and I am pleased to share them with all stakeholders as we prepare for the upcoming meeting.

2. The second meeting, held just over 12 months after the first, will provide an opportunity for consolidating the progress made at last year's meeting, as well as for making further progress on a number of ongoing issues. The need for significant effort on key issues was anticipated in developing the rules of procedure for our meetings, in which we stipulated that the second and third meetings were to be held, respectively, one and two years after the first, and that thereafter ordinary meetings would be held every two years.

3. At the first meeting, we took decisions that were key for the ongoing implementation of the Convention, including providing guidance on the operation, duration and terms of reference of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-building and Technical Assistance and providing guidance to the Global Environment Facility on overall strategies, policies, programme priorities and eligibility for access to and utilization of financial resources, among other things. Further necessary action was taken in electing the first members of the Implementation and Compliance Committee. The Conference of the Parties decided on rules of procedure and financial rules for itself and its subsidiary bodies, with only unresolved issues remaining in square brackets. We adopted several guidance documents, including in relation to mercury supply sources and trade, as well as mercury emissions, and to the Global Environment Facility in its role as an entity of the financial mechanism. We also commissioned intersessional work on a number of issues, including interim storage and waste, and the steps required to prepare for the evaluation of effectiveness required under article 22. At its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties also welcomed the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the secretariat of the Convention in Geneva, along with Switzerland's annual host country contribution of 1 million Swiss francs, and requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to perform the functions of the secretariat initially through a Minamata Convention secretariat located in Geneva. It also decided to review the organizational arrangement at its second meeting.

4. At the upcoming meeting, further work is to be undertaken on a range of issues presented at the first meeting, with further consideration of unresolved issues involving the rules of procedures, the financial rules, the memorandum of understanding with the Global Environment Facility, and certain provisions of the Specific International Programme. Ongoing technical work, in particular the development of guidelines on interim storage, the establishment of waste thresholds and the work on guidance on the management of contaminated sites, will be discussed with a view to further consideration of it by the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting. The Conference of the Parties, at its second meeting, will also consider the report of the ad hoc expert group on effectiveness evaluation and decide what further work, if any, is necessary to provide a framework for the effectiveness evaluation of the Minamata Convention. Information on releases of mercury to land or water and on emissions of mercury from the open burning of waste will be considered, as will information relating to capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer. At its second meeting, in accordance with the decision taken by the first meeting, the Conference of the Parties will also review the organizational arrangements of the secretariat, relevant budget adjustments, and the proposed rules of procedure for the Implementation and Compliance Committee.

5. I see our second meeting as an excellent opportunity to consolidate the work that has been started, and to build on the progress made to date. The technical briefings will afford participants the possibility of increasing their knowledge about a variety of important subjects. I anticipate that the second meeting will be a focused working meeting. I therefore encourage all delegations to undertake preliminary discussions prior to it, including regional consultations and bilateral discussions. The Bureau has decided against establishing a committee of the whole at the second meeting, following the practice of the other chemicals and waste conventions. In fact, the reason a committee of the whole was established at the first meeting was to create a space – as an alternative to an intergovernmental negotiating committee – where non-parties could engage fully in the finalization of the work that had to be delivered at the first meeting. With the second meeting, we are entering the normal phase of life of a convention, and we no longer require a committee of the whole in order to do our work.

6. The opening of the second meeting will take place on the morning of Monday, 19 November. After the opening session, regional groups and, if requested, individual parties and observers will have the opportunity to make short opening statements. We hope to be able to move swiftly from the opening session to substantive discussion in plenary.

7. I anticipate that the week's discussions will be held mainly in plenary but also in smaller groups as needed, in particular to capture the meeting's outcomes. I intend to conclude matters that do not require a formal decision in plenary by means of a summary and reflection in the meeting report. Matters on which no agreement can be achieved in plenary will be sent to contact groups. As was discussed by the Bureau, I intend to establish contact groups on effectiveness evaluation, on technical matters and on financing, as well as one or two contact groups on budgetary and institutional matters, including secretariat issues. I hope to be able to establish the first contact groups as early as Monday morning in order to allow the maximum time possible for their important work. Contact groups will be chaired by co-chairs, in the selection of whom I intend to ensure the equitable representation of regional groups. In recognition of the small size of some delegations, the number of meetings held simultaneously will, as far as practicable, be kept to a minimum.

8. It is my hope and expectation that by the end of the second meeting we will have resolved a number of outstanding issues, including finding a permanent solution for the secretariat arrangements. I anticipate that we will make good progress on technical matters, particularly those where a comment period has enabled the resolution of issues during the intersessional period. I look forward to the opportunity of working with all of you in Geneva this coming November, and of engaging in robust discussions in a spirit of friendly cooperation to ensure that the Minamata Convention on Mercury continues to make progress towards its overall objective.